

California Water Quality Monitoring Collaboration Network  
Triennial Audit Report  
December 2013  
Prepared by Erick Burres, CWQMCN Facilitator

The California Water Quality Monitoring Collaboration Network (CWQMCN aka Network) is a voluntary monthly Webinar that allows members of the monitoring community to network and exchange information and ideas on topics of interest. The Network helps support a state framework to coordinate consistent and scientifically defensible methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting. This report is response to the Monitoring Council's request to review the California Water Quality Monitoring Collaboration Network's activities and progress since 2011.

The CWQMCN was formed in 2009 as a joint effort between EPA Region 9 and the Water Boards with a goal of providing Webinar Sessions designed to create and foster communication and collaboration among water quality monitoring efforts across the state. As the National Water Quality Monitoring Council states, *"Collaboration and Outreach works to build partnerships that foster collaboration among the many elements of the water monitoring community by supporting development of state and regional monitoring councils and promoting the importance of monitoring for decision-making."* As we build these sessions, we enhance the capacity to collect data and information in a more effective and efficient manner that will work towards water quality improvements and maximizing budgets.

The webinars have consisted of several types of forums and a variety of topics.

Forums-

- 1) Providing information to the Group (e.g., State Program Overviews, technical and support tools, information in various water quality indicators, assessment methods).
- 2) Providing an expertise dialogue (e.g., Bioassessment, monitoring design, blue-green algae phenomenon).
- 3) Providing a forum for networking (e.g., recent developments in regional monitoring or citizen monitoring groups), problem solving, and feedback on program and tools.

Topic Categories-

- 1) Water Quality Monitoring Programs
- 2) Water Quality Monitoring Projects
- 3) Monitoring Tools
- 4) Quality Assurance
- 5) Management and Administrative Tools
- 6) Data Sharing
- 7) Reporting

Since 2010 the CWQMCN has been facilitated by the Water Board's Citizen Monitoring Coordinator, Erick Burres. The Network has hosted 32 webinars since January 2011 (50 total overall). All webinars were recorded. These recordings were made available for viewing, along with a downloadable pdf of any presentation material, at the CWQMCN's webpage ([www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring\\_council/collaboration\\_network](http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/collaboration_network)).

To learn about the webinar series usefulness and to solicit new topic ideas a post-webinar participant survey was launched during the first half of Fiscal Year 2012-2013. By using an online questionnaire, webinar participants were invited to take a survey for each webinar in which they participated. Through the survey it was learned that 88% found the quality of the information presented in the webinar to be

of “high or very high quality” and 63% found the webinar they participated in to be “very useful to extremely useful” in addressing their needs as related to the webinar. Participants also showed a high likelihood that they would recommend the webinar’s recording to their colleagues. Providing a glimpse of the value to collaborations and networking nearly a fifth of the survey participants (19%) learned about a given webinar through a forwarded email announcements. In addition, fifteen webinar topics such as Delta Modeling and natural source identification were suggested for future webinars.

The CWQMCN has partnered with national and local organizations (e.g., National Monitoring Council, Delta Stewardship Council, Southwest Association of Freshwater Invertebrate Taxonomists) expanding the webinars’ audience and impact. In 2012 the National Water Quality Monitoring Council invited the CWQMCN to present its successes through the “Strengthening Monitoring Programs through Nonprofit/Government Collaboration” tract and also present a poster at the 8th National Monitoring Conference “Water: One Resource-Shared Effort-Common Future” .

- Presentation:  
[www.acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2012/O1/O1Bures1.pdf](http://www.acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2012/O1/O1Bures1.pdf)
- Abstract:  
[www.acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2012/abstracts/abstracts\\_2012\\_sessionO1.pdf](http://www.acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2012/abstracts/abstracts_2012_sessionO1.pdf)
- Poster:  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/monitoring\\_council/collaboration\\_network/docs/2012nwmcposter.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/monitoring_council/collaboration_network/docs/2012nwmcposter.pdf)

The use of online social media has benefited the CWQMCN and greatly enhanced the access and audience for the CWQMCN’s archive of webinar recordings and networking ability. Since 2011 the California Water Quality Monitoring Professional Network on [LinkedIn.com](http://LinkedIn.com) has provided an opportunity for individuals to network outside of the webinar format and currently has over 340 members. In 2013 the CWQMCN established its own YouTube Channel ([www.YouTube.com/CWQMCN](http://www.YouTube.com/CWQMCN)) where 13 playlists/62 videos are available. Over 2000 views have been reported in the short time that these videos have been made available. The Lyris email list for CWQMCN currently includes over 1,450 members through voluntary sign-ups.

The CWQMCN is not water quality theme based as are other Work Groups. This triennial review was conducted by analyzing webinar content against the evaluation criteria. The Network’s goals are to help water quality monitoring programs which in turn protect and or restore California’s waters and their beneficial uses. Perhaps in future years it may be advisable to see how these webinars helped improve California’s water quality, monitoring programs and watershed management.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	RATING BENCHMARK	DISCUSSION
1-Strategy, objectives, design	High	Feedback from surveys and other comments suggest the CWQMCN is meeting its goals.
2-Indicators and methods	High	The webinars have been providing current information regarding Indicators and Methods, including QA, with the goal of improving monitoring performance statewide.
3-Data management	High	Webinars are continually being offered regarding data

		management, and sharing, with the goal of improving monitoring performance statewide.
4-Consistency of assessment endpoints	Medium	Although webinars have not been presented directly on assessment endpoints, they have been presented and discussed within many webinars.
5-Reporting	High	The webinar series has provided reporting guidance and has been a forum for water quality monitoring programs and projects to share their reports.
6-Program sustainability	High	At present the CWQMCN is sustainable. Improvements could be made by adding an additional facilitator(s) and seeing greater coordination with other Work Groups. Currently WebEx cannot support all of the CWQMCN's video conversion needs and additional software is needed.